

EXPANDING OUR OUTLOOK



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President

IN 2010, we modified the definition of the practice of professional engineering in the *Professional Engineers Act* to read:

“Practice of professional engineering’ means any act of planning, designing, composing, evaluating, advising, reporting, directing or supervising that requires the application of engineering principles and concerns the safeguarding of life, health, property, economic interests, the public welfare or

the environment, or managing of any such act.” 2010, c.16, Sched. 2, s.5(1).

Since the safeguarding of “economic interests” has been designated as one of the concerns of our act, the annual licensing of only 2500 of the 6000 engineering graduates from Ontario universities, largely because of the lack of opportunity for them to obtain their four years of experience for licensure, is unacceptable! The pursuit of a solution becomes an issue of responsibility and concern about others.

Expansion of our efforts in international marketing and related mobility for our engineers would increase our penetration of world markets, with a resulting opportunity to increase employment in Canada.

While Canada is now among the world’s top exporters of engineering services, it must be duly noted that the promotion of engineering initiatives abroad is no longer the domain of large international companies, but is now welcomed from individuals who have ideas and plans to exploit them, with the aid of government and private investment.

Personally, I became aware of the planned increase in opportunity for Canada when Akhilesh Mishra, consul general of India and an engineering graduate, addressed the Indian Institutes of Technology Alumni Canada’s PanIIT 2014 International Conference in Toronto. He explained in some detail his country’s plans to place greater emphasis on modernizing India’s infrastructure since the recent election of its new government. Subsequent to this event, at which I also spoke on the introduction of new technologies, Mr. Mishra invited me to attend his embassy to discuss the very great need for improved transportation infrastructure, energy generation and distribution, and biomass incineration of waste among other initiatives in India. He expressed

hope that Canadian engineers would increase their participation in this work.

Global demand for engineering services requires the establishment of internationally recognized qualification and practice standards to protect public safety abroad to the same standards of protection as have been established in Canada.

This is accomplished in practical terms through mutual recognition agreements that recognize the substantial equivalence of international engineering qualifications to those of our own, permitting immigrants to practise here in Canada and us to practise abroad.

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In application of the Washington Accord, one of the mutual recognition agreements referred to above, PEO’s Academic Requirements Committee is favourably “looking to exempt”

[PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE]

from PEO technical examinations those internationally trained engineering graduates coming to Canada from the accord's signatory countries.

However, wishing to learn more at the PanIIT conference about engineers from India, to my surprise, I found a lack of knowledge and profound apprehension of anticipated difficulties with PEO's licensing process from these well-qualified engineering graduates. In fact, most of these engineering graduates from the best universities in India were now working in Ontario without a PEO licence. They were apprehensive of applying because they felt it a barrier they did not need to contend with because, among other reasons, they had the misconception that the so-called industrial exception meant they really did not need to be licensed.

Immediate measures must be taken to alleviate these fears about our licensing process and to correct the inaccurate interpretation of the industrial exception by conducting seminars on the merits, process and necessity for PEO licensure.

Obviously, a second action by PEO should be to drive home just how much the industrial exception is distorting licensure in Ontario. Such action, in addition to providing proper direction, could add a substantial number of new members to our association.

The need to change our experience requirements interview process for international applicants still remains an issue. PEO does not interview Canadian graduates for their experience requirements before licensure, using instead their workplace reports over four years for this purpose. Why do we not require such reports from the signatories to the accord for their internationally trained? Many of the signatories to the Washington Accord could make these available, I am sure, for they, too, are industrialized societies that keep records. Alternatively, the fairness commissioner could demand the introduction of experience reviews for domestic graduates.

In all of this we obviously have a discriminatory perception problem to overcome—one that would be much easier to solve if we accepted academic review under the Washington Accord and required similar experience reports for international applicants.

For your information, signatories to the Washington Accord's academic standards include the following 21 countries, many of which are prominent technical powers: Australia, Bangladesh, Canada, China, Chinese Taipei (Taiwan), Hong Kong, India, Ireland, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, New Zealand, Pakistan, Philippines, Russia, Singapore, South

Africa, Sri Lanka, Turkey, the United Kingdom and the United States.

Of those who have worked abroad, I am sure many can relate to such an impressive array of developed and developing countries with which to do business.

With clear indications that a vast array of global engineering work beckons, for single operators as well as large multi-national companies, where design and fabrication might largely take place in Canada, and where both domestic and internationally trained engineers could take part, it behooves us to strike while the iron is hot and exercise our rights as a founding signatory of 25 years. With judicious application, standards set by the Washington Accord could provide a model for appropriate acceptance of offshore engineering throughout Canada.

I urge PEO to accept the realities of fast-moving international business, recognize the adequacy of the Washington Accord, become a compatible, fully established player, and serve our members accordingly. It is too important an issue to leave unanswered and unsolved. Thank you very much. Σ